

Hearing at the

Committee on International Relations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-0128

Subcommittee on International Terrorism and
Nonproliferation
Edward R. Royce (CA), *Chairman*

“9/11: Five Years Later, Gauging Islamist terrorism”

TESTIMONY BY DR WALID PHARES

“Projecting Future Jihadi Terrorism five years after 9/11”

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Sherman, Members of the Committee,

It is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today to discuss the theme “9/11: Five Years Later, Gauging Islamist Terrorism.” My contribution is titled: “Projecting Future Jihadi Terrorism, five years after 9/11”

1. Who is the enemy?

The first question to be addressed is the **identification** of the enemy. Who are they and how do we identify them? For one analytical mistake made at this level would send the United States and its allies fighting either the wrong war or against the wrong enemy: America’s efforts may be derailed by an enemy deflecting our attention from the real objectives, or deflected from engaging the enemy’s most vital assets he has against us.

a. The issue of the name:

The enemy who flew airliners against the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the one the US defeated in Tora Bora and are still engaging in the Sunni triangle in Iraq; and that enemy which is still striking against Democracies and allies around the world has a name for itself: **Jihadists** (*al jihadiyun*). It uses an ideology with a name, **Jihadism** (*al jihadiya*); it recruits with a very specific set of doctrines and operates under ideologically-grounded strategies: Hence, the U.S needs to be specific in calling the enemy with its real name. U.S leaders shouldn’t be vague in their description of the enemy as Terrorists-only or to be dragged into the enemy’s trap as to alleged distortion of “what Jihad could mean.” U.S leaders can surely use a variety of descriptions, such as Islamists, Islamo-Fascists,

Islamic-Terrorists, but the US Government and the allies in the War on Terror should define the enemy officially as **Jihadists**.

b. The two trees

The Jihadists are of two ideological types: Salafist, who are radicals who developed within Sunni societies, and Khomeinists, who are radicals who developed within Shiia communities. The **Salafists** have various ideological and political branches: Wahabis, Muslim Brotherhood, Tablighi and others. From this “tree” came al Qaeda, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Jemaa Islamiya, Salafi Combat Group, and dozens of smaller groups around the world. The **Khomeinists** are the radical clerics in control of Iran. They have created Hezbollah in Lebanon, and along with the latter expanded cells around the world. The head of Salafi Jihadists today is al Qaeda; the head of Khomeinist Jihadism is the Iranian regime.

2 The Jihadi wars against the US leading to 9/11

It is strategically important to reassess the history of the **Jihadi campaigns** against America leading to 9/11. The first Terrorist engagement against U.S presence was by Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah as of 1983 in Beirut. The **Khomeinist** direct Terror campaign lasted till 1990 before it entered a second stage of regional expansion, and strategic penetration and preparation worldwide and within the United States for the future. **The Salafi Jihadists** before 1990, were concentrating on the Soviet Union, but preparing against America and the West. Since 1990, they refocused on the US, on its allies and within the Arab World.

During the 1990s, the Salafi Jihadists waged Terror in multiple countries, including in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Russia, Kashmir, Sudan, the Philippines, and beyond. Their international network, al Qaeda concentrated on the United States. Al Qaeda and its allies penetrated Democracies and America since the 1990s. The major strategic failure of the U.S and of its allies was their inability to identify or to counter the Jihadi penetration and action both internationally and nationally. The 9/11 Commission Final Report of 2004 covered a significant aspect of these historical failures throughout the 1990s, but missed two major ones: First, the fact that the U.S and its allies didn't identify the ideology of Jihadism as the producer of Terrorists and Terrorism; and second, the fact that the Jihadi strategic penetration of the Homeland was in fact a threat to national security. A “September 11” was possible because the enemy counted on the poor perception by the Government, little mobilization by the public, and more importantly, the possibility that the Jihadi factory within America will be able to produce Future Terrorism.

3) War with Jihadism since 9/11

a) *Is there **a progress** in the struggle against “Islamic Terrorism?”*

There has been a significant progress in the conflict with Jihadi-Terrorism, both internationally and within the U.S Homeland.

Internationally: al Qaeda lost the one regime that provided a state-sponsoring of its worldwide activities, Afghanistan. It wasn't able to reclaim any other regime yet. While it has recruited larger numbers of militants from the Islamist pools around the world, anti-Jihadist energies were also freed in many countries such as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, as well as in other areas. More countries are putting minimal energies against the rising Jihadi efforts, which is a better global situation than before 9/11. This is progress in the war but the turning point –in either direction- didn't occur yet.

Within the US: Al Qaeda lost the ability of a strategic surprise war since 9/11, but not its ability for strikes yet. By creating the Homeland Security Structure and maintaining a minimal mobilization of the public, the US Government has been making progress on the domestic front, in comparison with regression before 9/11.

But this progress, both internationally and domestically, is hanging on the ability of the United States and its allies to move forward, faster and with a strategic mutation in the next stage of the War with al Qaeda, while also preparing for the possibility of the engagement by the "Khomeinist" threat abruptly. If the US stops, waives, or confuses its vision of its enemies and their plans, the entire progress can be reversed to the advantage of the Jihadi Terrorists.

b) Was "Islamic Terrorism" weakened?

In summary: The Islamists have been weakened in ways they haven't understood yet, but they would soon realize and act accordingly; but at the same time they have empowered themselves in the US in ways Americans haven't fully grasped yet, but they can still reverse. By thrusting into their areas of production and spreading, the US-led coalition opened spaces for counter-Jihadi forces to rise. Al Qaeda and its allies, and the Iranian regime and its allies feel the danger but they can't assess the long term challenge they will be facing. Unfortunately, the international coalition also doesn't seem to realize that with few more initiatives, it can turn the tide on the Jihadists. However a number of strategic shortcomings are stopping the coalition from turning that tide. If the US-led campaign is not given the opportunity to redirect some of its resources into engaging the War of Ideas successfully, the future of this War on Terror is at risk. The Islamists-Jihadists have also penetrated Democracies, including the US, in ways that aren't fully comprehended yet among the public and large segment of Government. They have been weakened in their pre-9/11 classical abilities to infiltrate. But their second generation is growing in recruitment and thus in Terrorism potential, until a higher level mobilization takes place in America.

c) Are there deficiencies in the struggle against "Islamic Terrorism?"

Yes there are three types of deficiencies:

1. A war of ideas is still being waged against the American strategic perception of the enemy. Ideological efforts are ongoing to blur the vision of Americans in general, media and Government in

particular with regards to the identity of the enemy, its aims, its strategies and the strategies needed to defeat it.

2. One result of the misperception of the enemy is granting the Jihadists more time and capacity to further infiltrate and penetrate the country.
3. Another result of the misperception of the enemy is failing to empower potential allies in the Greater Middle East, particularly civil society entities.

d) How has Jihadism evolved since 9/11

Inside the US and its allies in Europe, the Jihadist movement is absorbing the counter terrorism pressures, analyzing the measures and is mutating to bypass them. It has designed two stages in its warfare: One is the development stage. It covers the spread of the ideology, the recruitment from the indoctrinated pools of militants, and the penetration of the national systems. The second stage occurs when the strikes are prepared and launched. U.S systems are countering them only at the final stage that is, in their preparation for Terror activities.

e) From where are they drawing support?

The Jihadists inside the United States are drawing their support from the reality that their space of indoctrination, recruitment and mobilization is not under legal or public sanctioning or pressure. They can operate up to 90% of their strategic growth under the current laws.

f) Are Americans complacent in considering the terrorist threat?

Since 9/11, the subsequent conflicts, and the Terror horrors around the world, the American public in general is developing a greater concern regarding the Jihadi Terror threat. Most Americans, by instincts and through images, understand that the threat is real and great. But the public is submitted to diverging final analysis on the War on Terror on behalf of its officials, politicians, media and academics. Thus the full talents of society are not mobilized yet.

g) What does the recent Hezbollah/Israel conflict mean for the broader struggle against terrorism?

Hezbollah's initial trigger of the War with Israel in July 2006, regardless of the current consequences, indicated that the Iran-Syria axis has reached a point of non return with the international community and has decided to wage a wider Terror war to deflect the immediate pressures: The UN Nuclear crisis with the Ahmedinijad regime and the UN investigation in the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri regarding Syria. In fact the greater concerns of Tehran and Damascus are the democracy experiments in the region and across their borders, from Afghani and Iraqi elections to the Cedars Revolution in Lebanon. The course of events in Lebanon and Iraq shows, despite the UN

resolutions 1559 and 1701, that the intelligence-Terrorist apparatus of the Iranian and Syrian regimes, of Hezbollah and other organizations including Hamas and PIJ, are moving to position themselves to act not only to confront Israel, but to renew the Terror war in Lebanon, increase Terror involvement in Iraq, trigger additional Terror action from Gaza and the West Bank, and threaten moderate Arab countries. A more dangerous move on behalf of this regional axis would be to use its assets and networks around the world and within the US for Terror activities, when decision in that sense is made. But the most dangerous threat to be faced by American and Western security, if not international security, would be in the next five years, actions taken *simultaneously* by both “trees,” even without direct coordination, and eventually using unconventional weapons.

4. General recommendations

Five years after, learning from the road to 9/11, and reading in the strategies of the Jihadists from both “trees,” I would offer the following recommendations, some of which I have advanced in my book *Future Jihad*.

A: The U.S and its allies must deliver and ***win the battle of identifying***, defining and naming the enemy. Legislative branches in America and within Democracies worldwide must have the political courage, the right knowledge and the wisdom to address this challenge. The current state of national and international laws is not able to provide a historic basis for Governments, media and public to mobilize fully against an enemy living and thriving within these societies.

B: Counter Terrorism strategies must be designed to ***intercept*** the Jihadists before they engage in Terror acts, and intercept the ideological threat before it produce the Jihadists. To do so, the public must be granted the knowledge and provided with the right information. With a higher level of national talents, Homeland Security’s capacities will meet the growing challenge before it reaches irreversible trends.

C: From other countries one could learn from components of successful experiences: Jordan and Morocco in the Muslim confrontation of Islamist extremism, the UK and Australia in their counter Terrorism tactics; but also learn from the resistance of civil societies to Terrorist ideologies in the Greater Middle East.

D: The nation is facing the challenge of what is being described as a choice between Civil Liberties and National Security: It is a false choice that shouldn’t be imposed on the citizens of America and Democracies worldwide. For by educating, informing and preparing citizens, legislators, judges and public servants regarding the nature of the enemy, a common understanding of its ideology, plans and tactics, would bring together the various components of US national security and justice, without even having to weaken liberties. A better informed judge (known as Counter Terrorism Judges in Europe) would work faster and easier with Law enforcement, and better informed citizens wouldn’t feel that the choice is even to be made between security and rights. From that perspective “Monitoring” will be directed at the Terrorists and citizens would

be excluded systematically from discrimination. The real resistance against Terrorism will be achieved when citizens will be part of that effort to isolate the Terrorists.

C: To better “attack the ideology fueling Terrorism” the United States must first pin it down, explain it, name it and expose it. The US Congress, representing the American People must enact laws that would equate the Jihadism of al Qaeda and Hezbollah with racism and Terrorism. Once the public at home and civil societies overseas can see the ideology of the enemy, then they can isolate it and reject it as is the case of Fascism, Nazism and Racism. Salafist and Khomeinist Jihadism are the pillars of Jihadism. They should be denounced and rendered illegal: Militant ideologies, that renders segments of humanity vulnerable to violence, murder and genocide cannot be allowed to recruit within civil societies.

In conclusion, the United States and its allies are delivering an up hill battle against an enemy that has prepared for and declared a universal war against free societies and democracy, decades before America decided to respond. However to reach the turning point in the War on Terror, the War of Ideas has to be won: The American public has to be granted real knowledge of the enemy and civil societies overseas have to be granted real support. This is how Jihadi Terrorism can be defeated historically.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today. I look forward to responding to any question that you might have.

Dr Walid Phares
September 7, 2006
U.S Congress

